

# Town of Harpswell

P.O. Box 39

Harpswell, ME 04079

January 4, 2010

Susan A. Gendron  
Commissioner of Education  
State of Maine Department of Education  
23 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Commissioner Gendron:

In response to your letter dated December 3, 2009 to the M.S.A.D. # 75 Superintendent of Schools, the Harpswell Board of Selectmen respectfully requests that you reconsider the calculation of the cost to be borne by the Town in the event that Harpswell voters vote to keep the West Harpswell Elementary School open. That cost has been estimated by the regional school unit to be \$219,030.60, and this is the cost figure that you have approved, that is slated to appear on the school-closing referendum and that we request that you reconsider.


We concur with the compelling position put forth by the Friends for Harpswell Education that the actual cost savings related to the principal position, if consolidation of Harpswell's elementary schools were to occur, is really a savings of only one-tenth of a position, not one-half of a position. We fail to see how the principal position cannot be viewed similarly to the teachers, given that the positions - in this case a half-time position - move with the students. We note that State statute, 20-A M.R.S.A. § 1512, requires that the cost calculation be based upon the "amount that would be saved if the school were closed." The .5 FTE principal will move with the teachers and students to the other school and so is not a savings if West Harpswell Elementary School closes. If the saving is calculated to be .1 FTE, rather than .5 FTE, this results in an additional reduction of approximately \$38,000 from the current \$219,030.60 cost calculation.

Because the closure of an elementary school is of such critical importance to the Harpswell community and your role as defined in statute is to approve the determination of expense to the member municipality, we are asking that you act within your authority to take another look at the calculation of additional expense that will be assessed to Harpswell in the event of a local vote not to close the West Harpswell Elementary School. When Harpswell voters go to the polls in March, they should be able to rely on your determination that the cost calculation accurately reflects the amount saved as referenced in State statute.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our reconsideration request.

Sincerely,  
Harpswell Board of Selectmen

  
James S. Henderson

  
Mark E. Wallace

  
Elinor Multer

cc: J. Michael Wilhelm, Superintendent of Schools, M.S.A.D. # 75  
cc: Friends for Harpswell Education